



Stonefly Maidens Women's Fly Fishing Club

A Natural Approach

Retrieves that cause fish to take and the strikes that hook them

One of the major reasons why so many fly fishermen fail is that they don't realize the importance of how a fly approaches a fish. A crayfish doesn't attack a smallmouth bass; nor would a minnow pick a fight with an 18-inch brown trout. Yet that's exactly what we do so often when we present a fly to the fish. This applies to all kinds of fishing: trolling, using plugs, spinning, and fly fishing.

Let me cite one example. I fished with an experienced freshwater angler last year on Christmas Island, in the South Pacific. This is perhaps the best place in the world--at least of the places where I've fished--to learn how to catch bonefish. There are days when you'll see more than 1,000 bonefish, usually in singles, doubles, or small schools. Christmas Island also has some of the best wading flats anywhere. When you're wading in such shallow water you're able to closely observe the fish and their reactions.

Inching our way across one of the flats, my friend and I saw three bonefish approaching, swimming very close together. They were going to pass slightly to our right as they headed for a nearby channel. When they were about 35 feet away, my companion made a cast that dropped his fly four feet beyond and about six feet in front of them. He started to

retrieve, when suddenly all three bonefish flushed wildly and tore off into the channel's safety.

What had happened was typical of what I see occurring so many times. Even after repeated failures, few anglers seem to know what they are doing wrong. They usually change fly patterns, assuming the fish didn't like their offering. After all, the cast was delivered so quietly that the fish didn't spook. The fly dropped exactly where the fisherman wanted it to land. And it's fairly evident that the fish didn't see the angler.

Usually a basic principle of retrieve was violated. That day on the Christmas Island flat, my friend made the same presentation several times--each time frightening the bonefish. He threw only a few feet in front and just past the cruising fish. The retrieve brought the fly toward the fish, but when it got closer, the fish had already moved so far ahead that the fly was actually approaching them from behind. This was, of course, an unnatural way for a prey species to approach a predator, so the fish instinctively fled.

Here's one of the most important rules concerning retrieving underwater flies: No fly should ever be retrieved so that the predator may think it's being attacked.

Predators chase and eat their prey; never in

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Meeting Information

- September 13, 2004,
6:00 pm Social Hour
7:00 pm Business Meeting and
Speaker
- Iron Horse Restaurant
6034 SE Milwaukie Ave
Portland, Oregon
(503) 232-1826
- Speaker: Pete Priepke
River City Fly Shop
Fishing for Coastal Cutthroat

This Month with the Stonefly Maidens

Pete Priepke is our Oct. 13 speaker. He is part of River City Fly Shop and is very knowledgeable about fishing for Coastal Cutthroat trout.

The October fish-a-long just happens to be for coastal cutthroat. We will meet at Klootch Creek Park just off Hwy 26 on the Necanicum River SE of Seaside. This is the location of Oregon's Klootch Creek Giant - aka the Seaside Spruce - a Sitka Spruce that stands 216 feet tall, measures 56 feet in

circumference and has a crown that spreads 93 feet. That makes it the biggest tree in the State of Oregon. The Klootch giant has been named Oregon's first Heritage Tree.

Carpooling is encouraged. A 4-5 weight with floating line, 9 foot leader, casting a sprucefly or muddler minnow into soft water with structure and stripped back/retrieved is the common technique.

Come to the meeting to find out all the details about the fish-a-long.

Fly Lines

October is in the air. The days are getting shorter and colder; the leaves are turning colors; and trout season on the west side will be ending at the end of the month. Now what do we do? If you are a die hard trout fisher, you'll fish until the end of the month, then get your gear cleaned up and put away for the winter so it's ready for the spring. Well maybe not. The Crooked River isn't that far away. If you're just a die hard fisher of anything, you'll get out your steelhead rod and go after summer steelhead on the Deschutes and the Clackamas and winter steelhead on the Sandy and the Clackamas.

Those of you were unable to attend the fish-a-long to the Steens Mountains missed a great trip. I always look forward to the long fishing trip. It is such a great opportunity to get to know members of the club a little better and to get to fish an area that I probably wouldn't otherwise go because of the distance.



All of the gals at Fish Lake



Tilda with a largemouth bass at Krumbo Reservoir

Tilda Runner

Rebecca Young seemed to be the hot rod for the trip. She caught double digit fish on the Donner und Blitzen. Robin, Carmen and I caught a few bass at Krumbo Reservoir. You'll have to ask Carmen, Rebecca, and Kathi how they did at Mann Lake.

We had all kinds of weather to fish and sightsee in. We had rain and wind at Krumbo, 70 degree sun on the Donner und Blitzen, and snow at Kiger Gorge Overlook. We were very fortunate to have Carrie Gordon, a geologist for the US Forest Service in Prineville, and Anndell Thompson from Union, join us for fishing and sightseeing. They were delightful companions and tour guides when Robin, Chris and I went sightseeing at the Diamond Craters and through the Malheur Wildlife Refuge. I sure learned a lot on this trip.

Sure hope more of you can join us next year. It's really a fun time.

Goings On

Oregon FFF Events



November 6, 2004 Northwest Flyfishers Tyer's Expo Glenn Otto Park Troutdale

BOW

Fly Fishing the Crooked River, October 16, Cobble Rock Campground, Prineville, OR

Fly Fishing for Steelhead, October 30, Valley of the Rogue State Park near Grants Pass, OR

Rod Building Workshop, December 4, Suttle Lake Church Camp, Sisters, OR

Native American Basket Weaving, December 4, Suttle Lake Church Camp, Sisters, OR

Information on 2004 workshops is available at www.dfw.state.or.us/outdoor_skills/bow.html. If you would like to put your name on the mailing list to receive registration materials, please contact Nancy Smogor, Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Program Coordinator, at (503) 947-6016 or nancy.e.smogor@state.or.us.

Other Programs for Women

Three Day Women's Steelhead School, November 7, 8, 9, & 10, 2004 Save yourself five years of experimenting with trying to catch Steelhead on a fly; AND stay at the fabulous the Salmon River Retreat perched above the rapids of the Salmon River. Awarded B&B with most scenic view by Arrington's National publication.

Because of our unique location, we are able to offer high quality fly fishing schools and lodging with luxurious feather beds and hot tub to warm after a day on river. The Fly Fishing Shop boasts the most complete fly fishing classroom on the west coast of North America. Our instructors are second to none in their dedication and understanding of the sport of fly fishing. Three days of instruction, fishing, gourmet food, AND massages upon request. For more information and to register, go to www.flyfishusa.com/adventure-trips/02-schools.html#WOMEN'S

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the natural environment does a crab pick a fight with a permit, or a baitfish chase a barracuda. When this happens, the reaction of the predator is to back off or flee. Predators expect to see their prey (or the fly) act and react in the natural manner of any creature in danger.

Whenever we present a fly to a fish, we must retrieve it so that it behaves like all the other prey the fish consumes. More important than the type of fly, the color, its size, or its sink rate is that a fly be retrieved in a natural manner.

The Fish's View An angler, either wading or in a boat, sees a fish ahead of him. A basic tenet of good presentation is never to throw your line over a fish, so most fishermen place the fly directly ahead of the fish, allowing only the leader to fall to the surface near the fish. Then they retrieve the fly in hopes the fish will strike it.

Let's look at this from the fish's viewpoint. It sees the fly swimming toward it; naturally, it expects this fly to try to escape as it gets near and realizes the danger--like all prey does. But instead, this "thing" continues to come straight on, in what the fish has to regard as an attack mode. Of course, the fish bolts.

What should you do in such a situation? Instead of dropping the fly directly in front of the fish, cast so that it falls to the water several feet to one side and a slight distance forward of the fish. Then begin your retrieve. What the fish will see is a creature that appears to be sneaking away to the side, and it'll bolt forward for the grab.

Let's look at another situation. The angler sees a fish directly in front of him and casts. What happens if the fly lands almost on its nose? The fish sees something directly in front of it, appearing to slowly or casually move away. This isn't a natural occurrence, so the fish will often refuse the offering.

But when the fly falls to the side, the fish sees what it expects: something trying to sneak away. Impulse will cause the fish to streak forward and hit the fly.

When a fish is lying in a channel or where a tidal current is carrying its food, it doesn't expect to see shrimp, baitfish, and other creatures swimming upcurrent against the tide. To the fish, this simply doesn't appear normal. Cast so that your fly comes sweeping down to one side of the fish; just before it gets to the fish, the fly should make a U-turn, right in front of the predator.

This is what occurs frequently in the current. Shrimp, crabs, and other morsels are drifting with the tide. Then suddenly they see downstream something that might eat them, so they try to go sideways, rather than continuing to drift toward the fish. A fly that sweeps downcurrent and then turns away directly in front of the fish is the most natural of all retrieves.

Perhaps where fly fishermen make the most

consistently wrong retrieve is with a fish cruising off to their left or right. What generally happens is that the angler drops his fly well ahead of and beyond the swimming fish. He starts his retrieve but while he's bringing the fly back, the fish is swimming forward. Far too often the fish moves far enough ahead so that the fly never passes in front of him at all, which would be the perfect retrieve. Instead, the fly approaches the fish from an angle and slightly to the rear. Coupled with spooking bonefish on the cast, I find this the major reason why anglers fail to score. This was the mistake that my companion constantly made at Christmas Island. Each time, his fly approached the bonefish at an angle from the rear.

If you always retrieve your fly so that it appears to be acting like any prey species--trying to elude a predator--your hookup rate will drastically increase.

Setting the Hook There are two methods I recommend for setting the hook on wet flies and streamers in fresh and salt water: the strip strike and the side strike. Both work, but a special technique is needed with either one. Fortunately, this technique is easy to master, once you understand the problems.

Strip strike. If you use the strip strike properly, you'll almost never break your leader tippet when you drive your hook into a fish. Here's the technique: You're retrieving the fly. You have the line clasped under a finger of your rod hand. Your line hand pulls or moves the line beneath the finger to activate the fly.

You think a fish has grabbed your fly. Instead of flipping the rod upward, you leave it just where it was during the retrieve. To set the hook, you release the line from your rod hand, grip it securely with your line hand, and make a short (usually gentle) backward pull. This tightening of the line between you and the fish will set the hook--even in a hard-mouthed tarpon.

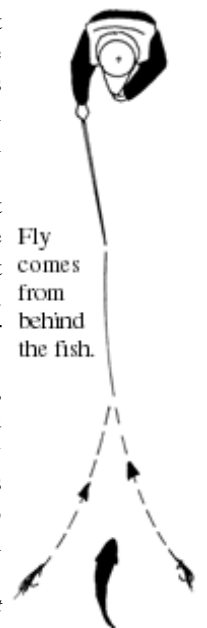
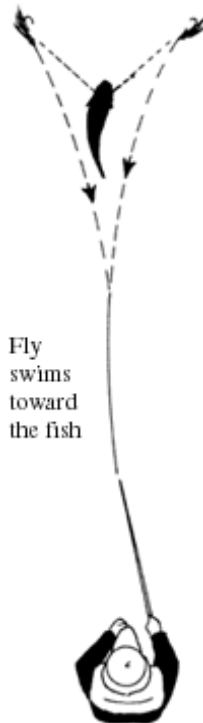
When you use the strip strike, be mindful of two things. First and most importantly, you don't need much pressure to set the hook in almost any fish; this is especially true with all freshwater species. A gentle set--pulling back no more than six inches on the tippet line--is all you need.

Second, the most panic-stricken moment for the fish is just after the hook is set. The fish will immediately try to escape. This first surge is when it's at full strength, and you must not allow it to jerk your fragile leader tippet.

The moment you make your strip strike, then, form an O-ring with the thumb and first two fingers of your line hand and allow the line to flow freely through the O-ring as the fish flees. The O-ring permits you to control the line and slow or stop the fish anytime you desire.

The side strike. The side strike is just what its name implies: When you think a fish has taken your fly, move your rod gently to the side.

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Our mission is to create opportunities, encourage, educate, and mentor women's participation in the sport of fly fishing.

Our goal is to bring women together who share a love of fly fishing and the beauty of nature to create friendships and lasting memories.

Stonefly Maidens Women's Fly Fishing Club

An Oregon Council-Federation of Fly Fishers Member Club

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Calendar

Date	Meeting	Fish-a-long Date	Location
October 13	Pete Pripke Sea-run Cutthroats	October 16	Nehalem River (sea run cutthroat trout) <u>women only</u>
November 10	Members Roundtable, Equipment Swap	None scheduled	
December 8	Christmas Party	None scheduled	

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There's no need to flip it hard. After all, you're using a lever that's probably from seven to nine feet long; it will easily set the hook with just gentle pressure. With a side strike, keep the rod low and parallel to the water as you move it sideways, and as soon as the hook is driven into the fish, form the same O-ring and follow the procedure described for the strip strike.

If you learn to strip or side strike in shallow water when using wets and streamers, or any other underwater fly except a nymph, you'll increase your score of hooked and landed fish -- in salt or fresh water.

A common mistake made by fishermen who fish steelhead and Atlantic salmon with dries is to strike improperly. When a Bomber or similar surface fly is cast across the water, the current causes the line to drag the fly in a skittering motion that is attractive to salmon and steelhead.

Now consider more fully what's going on during the retrieve. The fly is being pulled across the surface by the tension the current is exerting on the fly line. The fish rises and tries to suck in the fly, and the tension of the line actually moves the fly away from the fish. Then, compounding the problem, the fly fisher sets the hook as the fish takes. Between the line tension and the sweep of the rod, it's easy to see why the fly ends up being pulled out of the fish's mouth. Instead, when the salmon or steelhead takes your fly, drop your rod tip toward the fish so that slack occurs, permitting the fish to suck in the fly.

The information in this article is adapted from Presenting the Fly; A Practical Guide to the Most Important Element of Fly Fishing, by Lefty Kreh (The Lyons Press; available June 1999). The Editors.

Lefty Kreh, A Fly Fisherman Editor-at-Large, lives in Hunt Valley, Maryland.